

# MADISON COUNTY

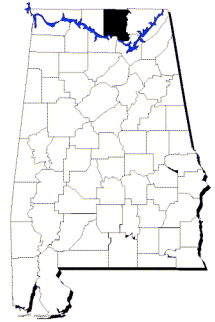
## Honorable Susan T. Moquin

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Garry Webb  
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Anne Roy Moore  
Ray Swaim  
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## Council Priorities

### 1. Adequate funding for social service programs (various)

*Essential services must to adequately funded in this state if we are to move forward. The state must develop and implement a plan to provide accessible and affordable services such as substance abuse treatment, comprehensive mental and physical health care, and education.*

### 2. Substance abuse prevention

*Substance abuse prevention*

### 3. Sustainability for existing programs

*Sustainability for existing programs*

# Issues

Issues are the primary concerns or problems facing children in the county

## Early Care Education

Children (0 – 5) are provided opportunities to fully develop emotionally, socially, physically, and cognitively and are ready to succeed.

### **All childcare providers need to be licensed and to meet every aspect of DHR's minimum standard**

#### **Action Steps**

- 1) Support the creation of an upper tier of subsidized child care reimbursement or funds for providers who meet every aspect of the state's minimum standards.
- 2) Support the provision of parent education that helps parents identify elements that increase the quality of child care.

### **Families need increased access to affordable, high quality child care (defined as meeting or exceeding all aspects of minimum standards)**

#### **Action Steps**

- 1) Support increased funding for each subsidized child care slot and for additional slots to eliminate the waiting list.
- 2) Support the availability of additional funding to provide a subsidy for the successful inclusion of special needs children in child care centers and home providers.

### **Compensation, benefits, and training for child care staff members need to be improved**

#### **Action Steps**

- 1) Encourage increased attendance at training on child development and positive behavior guidance.

## Economic Security

Children grow up in a financially stable home where the child's basic needs can be met.

### **Too many parents are underemployed**

#### **Action Steps**

- 1) Review the existing TANF (Temporary Aid to Needy Families) guidelines and make recommendations regarding the establishment of a more gradual schedule for withdrawal of benefits.
- 2) Support and expand available job training and job retention programs in the county.
- 3) Support and expand adult education programs.

## **The divorce rate in Huntsville/Madison County is too high**

### **Action Steps**

- 1) Investigate the possibility of re-introducing marriage and family education, as well as pregnancy prevention classes, into the high school curricula.
- 2) Make information regarding alternatives to divorce available prior to initiation of divorce proceedings.

## **Affordable daycare and transportation are not available to all residents**

### **Action Steps**

- 1) Work to raise the priority of daycare funding.
- 2) Support local efforts to improve public transit services.
- 3) Schedule speakers to address the Children's Policy Council on the current status of daycare funding and local public transportation plans.

## **Education**

Children learn the skills necessary to become productive citizens.

## **Too many students are dropping out of school and not graduating from high school**

### **Action Steps**

- 1) Seek to expand alternative learning opportunities such as technical education, non-traditional classroom alternative programs and school/work co-op programs.
- 2) Implement full-service schools to include summer programs, after-school services and parenting programs.
- 3) Encourage schools to promote reading, sports, and extra-curricular activities to help generate interest in staying in school.

## **Lack of non-traditional programs specifically geared to special needs populations, such as those with mental health issues**

### **Action Steps**

- 1) Continue to support initiatives, such as the Circle Project, to place social workers, mental health staff, and other service providers in the school program. The Circle Project has been expanded to serve more schools.
- 2) Work with local providers to create additional slots in the existing programs.

## **Integrate marriage and family courses into the high school curricula**

### **Action Steps**

- 1) Coordinate with local educators to incorporate marriage and family courses into the local high school curricula.

## Health

Children's (0 - 19) physical and mental well-being in the county.

### **Unmet needs of mental health and substance abuse services**

#### **Action Steps**

- 1) Continue to work to address the huge unmet need for substance abuse and mental health services.

### **Lack of funding for substance abuse treatment for teens and delinquents**

#### **Action Steps**

- 1) Identify funding to operate a Chemical Addictions Program in Madison County

### **Public health funding has been significantly cut**

#### **Action Steps**

- 1) Involve public health officials more actively in the local Children's Policy Council.
- 2) Update Policy Council members on the current status of Public Health funding.
- 3) Increase funding for staffing needs of Medicaid for out-stationed workers.

## Parent Involvement Skills

Parents and guardians participation and effectiveness in fostering an environment for children to become mature, responsible and independent adults.

### **Family violence reduction rate needs improvement**

#### **Action Steps**

- 1) Support local family violence education programs for parents and children and seek to ensure that these programs contain information on substance abuse, domestic violence, anger management, and child care.
- 2) Establish an active sub-committee on parent involvement and skills.

### **Lack of parent knowledge about child development and behavioral management**

#### **Action Steps**

- 1) Continue to work with the Early Childcare and Education Committees to promote research and resources to parents.
- 2) Support activities being implemented through the Early Learning Opportunities Act (ELOA) grant.

### **Promote and fund countywide pre-marital counseling**

#### **Action Steps**

- 1) Coordinate with local educators to incorporate marriage and family courses into the local high school curricula.
- 2) Support local initiatives, such as the Marriage Coalition, that is designed to address these issues and have updates/progress reports at local CPC meetings quarterly.

## **Safety**

Children live free of abuse, neglect, crime, and drugs.

### **Child death rate is too high**

#### **Action Steps**

- 1) The Council will ask the Child Death Team to present a briefing for the membership on causes of unexpected child death.
- 2) Continue to support local initiatives to increase the use of child safety restraints, including legal requirements, education about injury prevention, and training on installation.
- 3) Increase prevention efforts directed toward substance abuse by children 8 - 12.

### **Improve services to behaviorally challenged youth**

#### **Action Steps**

- 1) Develop re-integration/step-down services for children leaving more restrictive settings.
- 2) Support local community-based initiatives, such as the Boys and Girls' Club, to serve pre-delinquent youth with structured programs such as day-reporting, year-round school, and weekend interventions.

### **Continue to support and expand prevention programming for all children**

#### **Action Steps**

- 1) Support school-based programs such as Gang Intervention and Violence Education (G.I.V.E.), violence prevention curricula, DRIVE, Safe Teens, and bullying prevention programs.
- 2) Continue to identify programs designed to offer support and services to children and their families.

## Policy Recommendations

- Increase license fees and penalties for alcohol and drug offenses and earmark those monies to treatment programs.
- Re-activate the Juvenile Community Placement and Supervision Program previously operated by the Alabama Department of Youth Services.
- Increase funding for mental health, substance abuse and mental retardation services.
- Revise existing TANF (Temporary Aid to Needy Families) guidelines to establish a more gradual withdrawal of benefits.
- Establish tiered reimbursement of subsidized childcare funds, increase funding for each subsidized child care slot and place daycare funding at a higher funding priority.
- In order to combat the usage of fake IDs, require minors to carry at least two picture IDs and restrict all bars to admitting only those who are 21 and older.
- Restore funding for public health programs and increase funding for Medicaid workers who are out-stationed at other locations.
- Provide state seed funds for the development of local programs to meet identified needs.
- Fund re-integration and aftercare funding for youth leaving more restrictive environments such as juvenile justice facilities or mental health treatment facilities.

## Accomplishments

1. The partnership between the Madison County Children's Policy Council and the National Children's Advocacy Center continued with the renewal of the Early Learning Opportunities grant. This Federal grant, which was renewed in September of 2005 for \$972,590, is being utilized to continue and expand the Parents as Teachers program, continue the Health Families program, continue and expand the First Steps program, help fund the Circle Project for children in pre-school, kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade, and begin the Brain Builders program. The ELOA grant program involves many other local service providers.
2. The Early Care and Education Committee of the CPC is working with the United Way and Success By Six to develop strategies aimed at improving school readiness. The ECEC has conducted original research in child care centers with parents to examine parenting influences, sources of parenting information and understanding of child development milestones.
3. The CPC continues to function as a forum for the discussion of areas of concern in the community, including mental health services, substance abuse services, transitional services, and physical health services. Various speakers have addressed the group on the following: an update on changes in the delivery of mental health services was given by Decatur General West, a presentation on Infant Mortality Rates was given by a representative from the

Department of Public Health, and the Executive Director of the Alabama Department of Children's Affairs has presented information on statewide initiatives in early learning.

4. The CPC has been successful in encouraging participation by non-mandated agencies and service providers. Child care providers, mental health professionals, medical professionals, child advocates, and media representatives have joined mandated members at recent meetings. Meetings are open to all interested parties.
5. The CPC also functions as a place where members and local service providers can give program updates, discuss challenges, share successes, and distribute materials.
6. Development of the annual Needs Assessment is accomplished each spring as a function of the Policy Council as a whole. A review of the last assessment and a discussion of needed changes in each topic takes place in smaller work groups.